

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DCS Recognizes Foster Care Awareness Month
During May, need for foster parents for children in state custody is emphasized.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - May is Foster Care Awareness Month, a time when state child welfare agencies, family services providers, social work professionals and others spotlight the ongoing need for foster parents. It is also a time demonstrate appreciation for those who have chosen to serve children in this special way. The Tennessee Department of Children's Services is spending this month organizing regional events in appreciation of DCS foster parents across the state, as well as continuing its efforts to recruit suitable individuals to open their hearts – and their households – to children in need of a welcoming home environment.

"Foster parents are a major lifeline to the work our agency does," said Commissioner Viola P. Miller. "They are resources who are in the trenches in local communities across the state that help make our work more seamless and are instrumental in helping to build better outcomes for children in our care."

The department will be honoring 12 foster parenting couples from each of the DCS regions across the state next week at the Foster Parent of Year Reception to be held at 5 p.m. Thursday, May 26, 2005, at the Nashville City Center, located at 511 Union St., on the 27th floor. Honored will be Mary and George Corson (Upper Cumberland), Renay and Tony Roberts (Northeast), Shani and Charles Elmore (East), Nancy and Scott Williams (South Central), Lora and Bruce McKay (Shelby), Beverly and Dicky Holland (Southwest), Virginia and James Lawrence (Davidson), Cindy and Carl Elliott (Knox), Kathy and Bobby Groves (Mid-Cumberland), Linda and Bob Harr (Northwest), Peggy and Roy Lee Carroll (Southeast) and Imogene and Roger Gorsuch (Hamilton). Also in attendance will be Governor Phil Bredesen and Commissioner Viola P. Miller.

The honorees have been foster parents for at least two years, met annual training requirements, advocated for the children in their home, supported a child's relationship with his or her birth parents, been active in recruiting other resource parents and have otherwise been busy in their respective communities in supporting the department's vision.

The department recently began referring to what are commonly known as foster and adoptive parents by a new name – resource parents. Resource parents can be foster or adoptive parents, and they undergo the same training and are required to meet the same criteria. Resource parents undergo 30 hours of specialized PATH (Parents as Tender Healers) training and must meet certain criteria, including successfully submitting to a home study and extensive background checks.

It is not uncommon for some resource parents who serve as foster parents to become adoptive parents themselves. Whether resource parents are foster or adoptive, they are collectively an immense reservoir of resources to DCS and the children it serves. Also, children enter foster care for a variety of issues, and some are ultimately on the path to being reunified with their biological families. In circumstances like these, resource parents act as a bridge toward such reunification.

"Being a resource parent is a special calling, just like being a teacher or a police officer requires a special sense of wanting to contribute to make society a better place," said Servella Terry, Director of Recruitment and Retention. "It takes a certain level of finesse to navigate through the uncharted territory of various personality types, issues and concerns that resource parents routinely encounter."

To learn more, visit www.state.tn.us/youth.

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